CHANNEL INFORMATION WINDOW VIA SERVER-CENTRIC INTERACTIVE USER INTERFACE

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5   A user interface for an interactive information distribution system is generated in a head end of the system as a digital bitstream and transmitted to subscriber equipment for display. Operation of the user interface is facilitated by functions on both a local level within the subscriber equipment and on a system level within the head end. The user interface may comprise an interactive program guide.

10   A "channel information" or "spotlight" window for the interactive program guide is described. In one embodiment, a bitmap for the spotlight window may be encoded and continuously broadcast from a server, for example, at a cable headend, to terminals. Upon receiving a signal from a remote control to bring up the channel information window, the terminal overlays the appropriate window over currently broadcast video.

15   In addition, selectable modes for navigation by way of the channel information window are described. Such modes restrict navigation from within the channel information window to a predetermined subset of available channels.

One technique for navigating among channels does not change the background broadcast video during navigation among channels within the spotlight window. An alternate 20 or additional technique to navigate among channels involves changing the background broadcast video to display the broadcast of the channel currently being shown and described in the spotlight window. Advantageously, this provides realtime updating of the background broadcast video in synchronization with the navigation in the spotlight window.

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